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to be organized by the village community as a whole. If smallpox, cholera or plague is reported in any nearby village or from Shamirpet itself, it has to fix the day on which the whole village shall perform religious worship in order to ward off the epidemic. It fixes the contribution which should be made by the different families to any communal undertaking. In any undertaking concerning the village as a whole the initiative often comes from the *panchayat*. For example, if a temple or shrine has to be constructed or a tank or well has to be repaired, the matter would be placed before the *panchayat*. This body would plan the measure and then proceed to fix all the details. It will determine the amount of the contributions to be raised, and collect it from each family. If it is necessary to approach the government for financial help in the matter, the *panchayat* would first thoroughly analyse the subject and examine all the possibilities. Only after such a discussion would it determine the precise steps to be taken. Similarly, if a complaint has to be made against any government official, the matter is first discussed by the *panchayat*.

In the village community there are several groups and factions; the various cliques often hold divergent views. However, at the meetings of the *panchayat* the minority almost always yields to the majority—mostly without any grumbling. But once the *panchayat* has risen a protégé of the dissenting clique may be instigated to defy the decisions of the council. With the emergence of several factions within the community, and the tacit encouragement given by some of the minority groups to certain offenders to ignore its decisions, the authority of the *panchayat* has been slightly weakened. In consequence, even when the *panchayat* has heard them and given its verdict, some cases drag on in a state of indecision. From time to time they come up for reconsideration, but two or three years often elapse before a final decision is made. Some long-drawn-out cases are decided by the active intervention of the Revenue or Police officials. But such cases are few. Only a comparatively rich person can defy the *panchayat*, for unless he is able to bribe one of the minority cliques, he cannot enlist their sympathy and support in the lengthy proceedings. In most of the ordinary cases the decision of the *panchayat* is binding and final.

It has been pointed out that the *panchayat* includes all the headmen of the different caste-groups as well as of the Muslim community. These headmen do not merely represent their respective